

THE KHASIS

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Syntengs in the interior and by the Bhois and Lymngams. The 291
 men in the Khasi Hills wear a cap with ear-flaps. The elderly
 men, or other men when smartness is desired, wear a white
 turban, which is fairly large and is well tied on the head.
 Males in the Siemship of Nongstoin and in the North-Western
 corner of the district wear knitted worsted caps which are often
 of a red colour. These are sold at Nongstoin market at about 435
 8 or 9 annas each. They are brought to Nongstoin by traders 286
 from the Synteng country, and from Shillong, where they are
 knitted generally by Synteng women. A small cloth is worn
 round the waist and between the legs, one end of which hangs
 down in front like a small apron. The Syntengs wear a
 somewhat differently shaped cap, having no ear-flaps and with
 a high-peaked crown. Both Khasi and Synteng caps are
 generally of black cloth, having, as often as not, a thick coating
 of grease. The old-fashioned Khasi female's dress, which is that
 worn by people of the cultivator class of the present day, is
 the following:—Next to the skin is worn a garment called
ka jympien, which is a piece of cloth wound round the body
 and fastened at the loins with a kind of cloth belt, and which
 hangs down from the waist to the knee or a little above
 it. Over this is worn a long piece of cloth, sometimes of muga
 silk, called *ka jainsem*. This is not worn like the Assamese
mekhela or Bengali *sari*, for it hangs loosely from the shoulders
 down to a little above the ankles, and is not caught in at the
 waist; in fact, Khasi women have no waist. It is kept in
 position by knotting it over both the shoulders. Over the
jainsem another garment called *ka jain kup* is worn. This is
 thrown over the shoulders like a cloak, the two ends being
 knotted in front, it hangs loosely down the back and sides to
 the ankles. It is frequently of some gay colour, the fashion in
 Mawkhar and Cherrapunji being some pretty shade of French
 gray or maroon. Over the head and shoulders is worn a
 wrapper called *ka tap-moh-khlieh*. This, again, is frequently
 of some bright colour, but is often white. There is a fold in
 the *jainsem* which serves as a pocket for keeping odds and ends.
 Khasi women in cold weather wear gaiters which are often long
 stockings without feet, or, in the case of the poor, pieces of cloth
 wound round the legs like putties, or cloth gaiters. I have seen 000

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headquarters of the Administration. The manufacture of country spirit gives employment to a considerable number of persons, most of whom are females. At a recent census of the country stills in the district, undertaken by the district officials, the number of stills has been found to be 1,530. There must be at least one person employed at each still, so that the number of distillers is probably not less than 2,000, possibly more. The spirit is distilled both for home consumption and for purposes of sale, in some villages almost entirely for sale. In the Jaintia Hills stock-breeding and dealing in cattle provides occupation for 1,295 people, according to the last census. The cattle are reared in the Jaintia Hills and are driven down to the plains when they reach the age of maturity, where they find a ready market amongst the Sylhetis. Cattle are also driven into Shillong for sale from the Jaintia Hills. Another place for rearing cattle is the Siemship of Nongkhlaw, where there is good pasturage in the neighbourhood of Mairang. These cattle are either sold in Shillong or find their way to the Kamrup district by the old Nongkhlaw road. Cattle-breeding is an industry which is capable of expansion in these hills. There are a few carpenters to be found in Shillong and its neighbourhood. The Khasis are said by Col. Waddell to be unacquainted with the art of weaving; but the fact that a considerable weaving industry exists amongst the Khyrwang villages of the Syntengs, and at Mynso and Suhtnga, has been overlooked by him. The Khyrwangs weave a special pattern of cotton and silk cloth, striped red and white. In Mynso and Suhtnga similar cloths are woven, also the sleeveless coat. In former days this industry is said to have been considerable, but it has been displaced to a large extent of late years by Manchester piece goods. The number of weavers returned at the last census in the district was 533. The Khasis and Mikirs of the low country, or Bhois as they are called, weave cotton cloths which they dye with the leaves of a plant called *u noli*. This is perhaps the wild indigo, or *ram*, of the Shan settlers in the Assam Valley. The weavers are almost always females. An important means of subsistence is road and building work; a considerable number of coolies, both male and female, are employed under Government, practically throughout the year, in

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children, but Christian influence has eradicated or driven underground the consumption by women and children. **Industrial arts.** The only industrial arts traditionally practiced in all households were a rudimentary carpentry and a simple utilitarian basketry. Other arts were few, and were practiced as village specialties: the washing and smelting of iron ore and the forging of hoes, daos, knives, swords, and cooking pots (upland Khasis); the spinning of cotton thread (Myuso village, Jaintia); the dyeing of cotton thread and the weaving of cloth (Jaintias, Bhois, Lyngngams, Wars); the spinning and weaving of Eri silk (Khyrwang and Nongtung villages, Bhoi and Jaintia); and the hand manufacture, without wheel, of painted earthenware pots (Larnai village, Jaintia). Ironworking and the production of cotton goods have nearly died out through the competition of machine-made goods. Carpentry has greatly improved. An innovation of major importance is the sewing and tailoring, on sewing machines, of ready-made garments for both sexes. [Cf. Darrah 1896; C., W. 1832.] Trade. Khasi villages normally contain a number of household shops operated by women. Every Khasi also lives within walking distance of several village markets that are held on successive days of the eight-day week. The limits of market intercourse for the members of any particular village can be roughly distinguished by their naming the days of their week, which are called after the active markets. The exception is the huge market at Shillong, much of which is active daily, and which serves as a magnet for Khasis from all over the hills. The traditional barter has given way to currency in all markets. The small ones contain at least some local farm produce, plus other essentials like betel nut, and the food and tea stalls which serve as centers of social intercourse. The big markets contain not only regional produce and manufactures but also products from distant parts of the hills, brought for sale by traveling middlemen. There is also substantial trade, from the hills to the valleys, in potatoes, pears, hides, lac, cotton, caoutchouc, the wood of the sal tree, Eri silk thread, limestone, coal, ivory, bay leaf, betel nut, pan leaves, bananas, sugar cane, oranges, til, turmeric, and chilies. From the plains to the hills, there is trade in dried fish, paddy rice, salt, cooking oil, kerosene, matches, tea, sugar, wheat flour, machine-made cloth, shoes, metal pots, crockery, porcelain objects, coral beads, silver, and gold. Markets are important not only as economic institutions but also as centers for recreation (including archery competitions), courtship, reaffirmation of kinship ties with distant relatives, and the dissemination of information of all kinds. [Cf. Stegmiller 1924a.] Division of labor. Men do the heavy work, such as clearing and burning the swidden fields, caring for cattle and goats and driving them to market, butchering and selling large cuts of beef and pork, carpentry and mining, and driving and laboring on motor vehicles. They also tailor men's

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243 on from October to December. For millets the seed is sown in April-May and reaped about six months later. Maize is usually sown in April-May and ripens in August-September. For potato, generally three crops are raised in the district; the first is sown in December-January and harvested in April-May, the second is sown in February-March and is gathered in June-July and the third is sown in July-August and is harvested in November-December.

245 For oranges and betelnut the orchards are cleared of weeds twice a year. Harvesting of orange takes place from October to January. Betelnut ripens at the beginning of the year and are collected between February and May.

241 **2.6.3 Agricultural implements.**—The usual agricultural implements are a hoe, a sickle, three or four kinds of doas, a harrow, a crowbar which is used for the construction of irrigation channels, 'sierras' and winnowing baskets. Bullock drawn plough is used in wet paddy cultivation in parts of Jowai subdivision and in Bhoi area and resembles the one in use in the plains of the State.

2. 6. 4. General cultural practices.—The cultivators mostly adhere to their indigenous practices of cultivation. Rotation of crops is not widely used. Cultivation of rice is usually done by broadcasting the seeds though transplanting is also in vogue in some areas. Mixed cropping is widely practised. Cultivation by making terraces in the hill slopes is gaining popularity in the district.

433 **2.7 Cottage Industries.**—Cottage Industries, it appears, have not
326 found very great favour among the people of the district. A few
323 families here and there manufacture iron implements, earthenware,
285 pottery, baskets, mats and jewellery. In striking contrast with other
306 districts weaving of cotton clothes is rare among the Khasis. The
286 Mikirs in Bhoi area and in areas adjoining North Cachar and Mikir
177 Hills practice it only for their domestic consumption. At present, the
654 Government is trying to popularise weaving in the district and this
231 has been welcomed by the Khasis. Among other cottage industries
production of eri cocoon in the northern part of the district adjoining
Kamrup district and bee keeping throughout the district are worth
mentioning.

142 **2.8 The People.**—The Khasis and Jaintias are a short sturdy
147 race distinct from the neighbouring hill tribes. By nature they are
441 hardy and laborious and in respect of manual labour, they are free
563 from any inhibition. Side by side with the Khasis live the Mikirs, Garos
and Nepalis who form respectively 7.32 percent, 3.38 percent and 3.27 per
cent of the total rural population. Besides, there are plains people who are
mainly concentrated in the town of Shillong. In the marketing centres
of the border area there are a large number of Bengali Hindus who
dominate the bulk of the trade in the border areas.

241 **2.9 Occupation.**—The greater portion of the population of the
433 district subsists on cultivation. More than 75 percent of the rural
461 households are predominantly agricultural. The industrious Khasi
agriculturists males and females have a high regard for hard labour

Name of village (1)	Name of society (2)	Sponsored by (3)
7. Sutnga	(1) Credit Society. (2) Co-operative Trading Society.	Local people
8. Darrang	Marketing Society.	Do
9. Shella	Trading Co-operative Society.	Do.

4.10 Cottage Industries.--It has already been mentioned that Village 433 and Cottage Industries are not very popular in the district.

The following table shows the industries reported from the sample villages:—

TABLE B-9

Industry	No. of villages reporting existence of the industries.	No. of villages reporting production for sale.
(1)	(2)	(3)
Cane and bamboo works	9	7
Blacksmithy	5	5
Tailoring	2	2
Handloom	...	...
Weaving and Spinning	3	1
Rearing of cocoons, etc.	1	1
Rearing of lac	1	1
Others	2	1

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Blacksmithy and making of baskets, cane products, etc., out of cane and bamboo, are a traditional occupation. Weaving and spinning of cotton, rearing of endi cocoon and weaving of endi, etc., are in vogue only in the Bhoi area and the areas adjoining Kamrup and North Cachar and Mikir Hills districts. Lac rearing is found in the northern portion of the district, i.e., Nongpoh area. [184]

Except cane and bamboo works and blacksmithy other industries are practised in a very limited scale. There is thus a lot of scope for introducing cottage industries in the district.